

matter which the applicants regard as the invention. The Examiner objected to the use of the phrase "from a positive amount" as indefinite. While applicants believe the meaning is clear when read in light of the specification, the phrase has been deleted from claim 2 by the foregoing amendment. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the amended claims.

By way of the Office Action mailed 3-Oct-2002 , Examiner Pratt rejected claims 1-3 and 5-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated and thus unpatentable over Patent Number 6,395,957 to Chen et al. ("Chen"). This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the presently amended claims. The present invention is directed to a fibrous web particularly adapted to serve as a transfer delay component of a personal care product. It comprises a substrate that is either naturally hydrophilic or treated to become hydrophilic to which is applied an aqueous slurry of microfine fibers that present a very high surface area and serve as a binder for the web. In preferred embodiments, the microfine fibers are hydrophilic and negatively charged for improved binding properties. The result is an effective liquid delay layer with controlled porosity for personal care product applications. Chen, in contrast, is concerned with a dry feeling absorbent web with a hydrophilic base sheet having a network of hydrophobic fibers with openings to allow exudates to pass. Although, as pointed out by the Examiner, there is no lower limit to the fiber size of the hydrophobic fibers in Chen, the lowest mentioned is 1 denier, clearly not microfine fibers in the sense of the present invention. Furthermore, Chen suggests a separately applied adhesive (col. 5, li. 44-63) for binding the layers together and the macroscopic openings of Chen would lead one of skill away from the microfine fiber layer in the structure of the present invention. It is respectfully submitted that Chen does not anticipate claims 1-3 and 5-11, particularly as amended. Moreover, added claims 12-15 even further distinguish over the Chen structure as calling for the microfine fibers to be hydrophilic or negatively charged.

By way of the Office Action mailed 3-Oct-02 , Examiner Pratt rejected claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made and thus unpatentable over Chen. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to claim 4, particularly as now dependent on amended claim 1. The distinctions between Chen and the invention as now claimed by applicants have been discussed in the preceding paragraph. Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Chen to form a structure with a hydrophobic surface having macroscopic openings would not render applicants' independent claim 1 including deposited microfine fibers obvious, in the sense of 35U.S.C.103(a) and, therefore, claim 4 is also allowable.

For the reasons stated above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the present claims are in form for allowance. Favorable notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

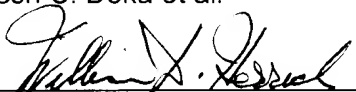
Since Applicants' added claims do not exceed in number the amount for which fees have been previously paid, it is not believed that any fees are due with this amendment. However, should this be incorrect, please charge any prosecutorial fees which are due to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. deposit account number 11-0875.

The undersigned may be reached at 770-587-8096.

Respectfully submitted,

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By:



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Amended.) A fibrous layer for personal care products comprising micro-fine fibers deposited as an aqueous slurry onto a nonwoven web that is inherently wettable or treated to be hydrophilic, and subsequently dried.

Claim 2 (Amended.) The fibrous layer for personal care products of claim 1 wherein said micro-fine fibers have [a] an average diameter [from a positive amount] to 0.5 microns.

Please add the following new claims:

12. The fibrous layer of claim 1 wherein said deposited microfine fibers have a negative charge.
13. The fibrous layer of claim 4 wherein said deposited microfine fibers have a negative charge.
14. The fibrous layer of claim 1 wherein said deposited microfine fibers are wettable.
15. The fibrous layer of claim 4 wherein said deposited microfine fibers are wettable.